

Your HOME Library

Learn how to care for and preserve your family treasures.



Every part of a book, document or work of art (which may include paper, cloth, leather, photographic emulsions, inks, pigments, plastics, adhesives, etc.) reacts to its environment and will deteriorate with age. This process can be slowed by storing your collection in a stable environment.

The environment is made up of four components: heat, relative humidity, light and pollutants. The ideal environment is cool, clean, dry and dimly lit. High heat, especially in combination with high relative humidity, rapidly accelerates deterioration.

Heat

Avoid storing any collection in an area that stays very warm or experiences extreme temperature fluctuations, such as your attic or garage. As a rule, 65-70 F is best for collections.

Relative Humidity (RH)

Library materials respond to fluctuations in relative humidity by losing and gaining moisture. It is more important to maintain a stable environment than to maintain a specific relative humidity. Evidence of fluctuating humidity damage is cockled paper, flaking or cracked photograph emulsions, warped book covers, warped or cracked parchment documents and books.

Relative humidity is related to temperature. Under normal conditions, if your room temperature is stable, the RH probably is too.

In Colorado and other arid regions the RH is naturally low. This causes some items to become brittle, but there are advantages to low (30 percent) relative humidity:

- Slower absorption of pollutants
- Less change in moisture content
- Greater stability

When moving materials from a humid environment to a dry one, acclimate them gradually. First, check for evidence of mold. Wrap or weight books and papers to avoid warping as they dry out.

Light

Exposure to light accelerates the deterioration of all organic materials. An object exposed to strong light for a short period will deteriorate as much as an object exposed to low light levels for a long period of time. Ultraviolet (UV) light is the most damaging; both sunlight and fluorescent light are high in UV.

In Colorado, our high altitude equals high levels of UV which are a constant concern for displayed collections as well as for people. The less direct light, the better.

- Don't display works of art on walls opposite windows. Bookshelves should not be exposed to direct sun.
- If exposure to light cannot be minimized, display facsimiles or use UV filters available* for this purpose.

Pollutants/Storage

In the home library, particulates (dust, crumbs, etc.) are a problem. Particulates are abrasive and attract pests such as insects and mice.

Clean dusty books before opening to prevent dust from falling inside. To dust a book:

- Hold the book tightly closed while removing it from the shelf.
- Use a cloth treated to pick up dust or a dry cleaning sponge;* draw the cloth across the head of the book from the spine to the outside edge.
- Dust the rest of the outside of the book. Do not rub or scrub with the cloth.

Shelve books with the spine out. Books should support each other, but should not be packed tightly.

Line bookshelves with polyester (an inert, transparent plastic)* to preclude problems caused by wood or painted shelving.

Store oversize books or documents flat.

Support the hinges of books on display to prevent strain (and possible breakage). Never display a book open to the same spot for an extended length of time.

A photocopy on archival paper is an excellent way to retain the content of a fragile document. Use the copy and tuck the original away for safekeeping.

Emergencies

A water disaster requires an immediate response. Wet books and paper begin growing mold in less than 48 hours, and mold spreads fast.

Remove and stabilize all wet materials

- Freeze them immediately. If the materials are precious, contact a conservator* for advice before air drying them yourself.
- If the emergency is small and the materials are not precious, wet books can be stood on end and air dried in an open, well-ventilated area.
- Paper left to dry without restraint will wrinkle, so it must be pressed as it finishes drying.
- Controlled exposure to sunlight will kill mold spores. Segregate moldy or wet books from the rest of your collection until you are sure they are clean and dry.

Dry and stabilize the environment

- Use fans to move the air.
- Use a wet-dry vacuum.
- Check all carpeting and flooring under heavy furniture (like bookshelves) to be sure it's dry.

Always use gloves when handling sooty and smoke damaged materials. The oils from your hands will set the soot, making it more difficult to remove later. Use a dry cleaning sponge to remove the sooty coating, following the instructions on the adjacent panel for cleaning dusty books.

Digital Media

Although they are a wonderful technology for access and sharing information, digital media cannot be considered archival or permanent. Always retain the original if it has importance, rather than depend on an electronic file or CD.

Handling and Repairing Valuable Materials

Place fragile or valuable items in a protective enclosure to minimize exposure to light, dust, pollutants and handling, then leave them alone. Restrain any impulse to “fix it up,” which will devalue the piece.

- Don't use pressure-sensitive tapes (Scotch tape for example). These stain and embrittle paper and are very difficult to remove. Instead, wrap and store a damaged item in an acid-free enclosure* until it can be professionally treated.
- Don't laminate (items adhered with heat to plastic). This process cannot be reversed. Encapsulation (placing an item between sheets of polyester film,* which can be sealed at the edges), is a good archival alternative.
- Don't touch the image area (emulsion) of a photograph.

Hire an expert* to undertake conservation procedures such as washing, deacidifying and repair of paper, rebinding, fumigation or photo restoration.

For more information on caring for your collection, refer to the materials on preservation available at the Library. They can be accessed in the JCPL catalog www.jeffcolibrary.org under the subject heading: “[Myra Jo Moon Memorial Preservation Reference Collection](#).” The collection is also available through Prospector and Interlibrary Loan.



Books

Care and Identification of 19th-century Photographic Prints

James M. Reilly 771.46REILLY

Care of Fine Books

Jane Greenfield 025.7GREENFIELD
General information for the home library

Caring for your Family Treasures:

Heritage Preservation

Richard W. Long 745.10288LONG
Practical guide to caring for objects of value

Cleaning and Preserving Bindings and Related Materials

Carolyn Horton Q025.7HORTON
Common-sense procedures for library collections

From the Hand to the Machine: Nineteenth-Century American Paper and Mediums: Technologies, Materials and Conservation

Cathleen A. Baker 676.20973BAKER

Guide to Collections Care

025.84 GAYLORD
Written by conservators, includes information on storage needs of many types of collections

How to Save Your Stuff from a Disaster

Scott Haskins 025.84HASKINS
Written for the home collection

Least Toxic Home Pest Control

Dan Stein 648.7STEIN

The Permanence and Care of Color Photographs

Henry Wilhelm Q770.283WILHELM

Photographs: Archival Care and Management

Mary L. Ritzenthaler 771.46RITZENTHALER

Preservation Websites

American Institute for Conservation of Historic & Artistic Works (AIC) www.conservation-us.org/

Tips for caring for your collections; listings of professional conservators by region and expertise

Preparing, Protecting, Preserving Your Family Treasures
www.loc.gov/preserv/familytreasures/index.html

Instruction as well as links to comprehensive information for preparing, protecting and preserving many types of family heirlooms.

Conservation Online (CoOL)

<http://cool.conservation-us.org/> Complete resource

Conserve O Grams

www.nps.gov/museum/publications/consveogram/cons_toc.html Complete resource

Heritage Emergency National Task Force

www.heritagepreservation.org/free/Index.html

Tips for handling water-damaged valuables and cleaning family treasures

Image Permanence Institute

www.imagepermanenceinstitute.org/

and www.graphicsatlas.org/

information on the preservation of photographs and digital output.

North East Document Conservation Center

www.nedcc.org Complete preservation resource

Society of Rocky Mountain Archivists

www.srmarchivists.org

State and local resources, including conservators; links to national sites

Archival Supplies

Gaylord Archival Storage Materials

1.800.448.6160 ☒ www.gaylord.com

Light Impressions

1.800.828.6216 ☒ www.lightimpressionsdirect.com

Metal Edge

1.800.862.2228 ☒ www.metaledgeinc.com

University Products

1.800.628.1912 ☒ www.universityproducts.com

Vendors will send a free catalog upon request.